

[121] tainty, then I cite supporting evidence; otherwise it may be taken
[122] that generalization for all net-hunters is considered valid. In point of
fact there seem to be few differences of structural interest.

[184] Enough work was done among archer bands to get some idea of
the extent and nature of the structural differences to be expected
between them and the net-hunters, but again I must emphasize
the considered need for further studies, one of which should include
a detailed study of an archer band over a similar period and with
similar intensity, and another of which should tackle the Mbuti/
Villager relationship from the village point of view. Finally, there is
need for detailed studies of the various local village tribes, at which
point those who are interested may begin to sort out which elements
of the present Mbuti culture may be considered as original, and
which as borrowed.

121 The over-all picture is one of a society where the lack of formal
• 105 structure is so evident that one wonders why there is not complete
disintegration. There are not only no chiefs or councils of elders, but
no ritual specialists, and no lineage system that in any way contrib-
utes directly to order and cohesion. There is no legal system, and no
body of belief in supernatural sanctions. The secret begins to reveal
itself when you look at the band one day, to see what it really is, and
look at it the next day and find it is something else.

As suggested above, the constant state of flux that characterizes
the Mbuti band may be in response to the attempts of the villager
cultivators to assert a formal relationship with it. The lack of chiefs
and the lack of priests and the lack of unilineal descent system cer-
tainly prevent the formation of political, ritual or domestic ties, and
as stated elsewhere (Turnbull, 1956) the economic relationship is
[187] one of mutual convenience rather than of dependency. What emerges
that seems to be of particular significance is the central theme of the
forest, a theme that not only orders the hunting and gathering world
of the Mbuti, but also divides them from the world of the villagers
as if dividing the sacred from the profane.

121 If social flux is what prevents the formation of a relationship that
177 would necessarily involve the subordination of the Mbuti to the vil-
18 lagers, the central value of the forest is what maintains internal sta-
bility and cohesion, at the same time determining the relationship
of opposition with the outside world. This opposition in fact creates
a kind of voluntary indigenous system of apartheid, where two peo-
ples live side by side, exploiting the same environment in totally dif-

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361 tion between villages is due only in part to rivalry for territory. It is
628 also due to suspicion of witchcraft and sorcery, a suspicion that seems
754 to increase as the distance of separation decreases. This, of course,
628 can also be interpreted as an expression of territorial friction, but it
609 is conceived in personal rather than territorial terms, and is accom-
754 panied by a general dislike and mistrust of strangers.

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361 Nor must we lose sight of the fact that whereas the Mbuti, even
765 with their nomadism, in which hunting camps are shifted every
month, have a strong sense of basic territorial permanence, the villag-
[P] 361 ers have none, and this gives rise to further instability. To mention
only one example, it is believed among the Bira that the dead should
be buried according to a prescribed ritual, and that the grave should
be cared for in a prescribed manner. The burial is always carried out
but it is a constant source of conflict having to care for a grave that
may be some miles away. Every time a village moves the villagers have
to face the fact that they are abandoning their dead, to some extent,
and they are unpleasantly reminded of the uncertainty of their own fu-
ture. We do not know what the original burial practice was before the
Bira moved into the forest; undoubtedly changes have been made, but
they have not adequately met the new situation.

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648 It is only in light of the relationship between each of these peoples
and the environment in which they live that we can understand the
relationship between the people themselves. It is in part ignorance of
this factor that has led to the gross misunderstanding of Mbuti/
Villager relationship, and indeed of Mbuti society itself. Before con-
sidering either the Mbuti or their relationship with the villagers,
however, a certain amount of further ground-clearing is necessary.

MBUTI, BAMBUTI, BAMBUTI

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101 A certain amount of confusion concerning the Mbuti arises out of
conflicting terminology, some of it totally inapplicable or lacking in
significance. First we have to be clear why we group together, under
any one name, all the pygmy hunters of the Ituri Forest, even though
they speak different languages and use different hunting techniques.

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044 Racially, they are clearly one people, quite distinct from any of the
surrounding Negro tribes. They form a strongly, visibly distinct unit.
Culturally, they are equally distinguished from their neighbors as a
unit, being hunters and gatherers, and not cultivators, with a conse-
quently totally distinct social structure. Differences in hunting tech-
niques do not affect the basic structural unity.

THE ECONOMY

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Because of the rarity of ritual performances there is one which should be mentioned here, though it seems unique and known only to net-hunters as far as I could ascertain. The ritual involves the building of a fire, with much greater care and concern than the hunting fire or the *molimo* fire, and it is believed specifically that the correct performance of this ritual will lead the Mbuti to honey and/or bring the bees, and their honey, closer to the Mbuti. A full description is given in the section on religion and magic (pp. 231-33). Here it need only be said that the preparations, including the digging of small trenches for water and the use of special woods and leaves, are designed to give the maximum amount of smoke. The lighting of the fire is accompanied by blowing on the *madé*⁴ (efe: *segbe*) whistles, through which water is first poured.

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All being taken into consideration, the relative lack of magic or ritual associated with food quest, the lack of interest shown in certain readily available forms of food supply such as fish, and the lack of food taboos all confirm the abundance of forest foods and the adequacy of Mbuti technology. This is important in considering the over-all economic system.

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ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF TERRITORY

While the environment does not, through areas of shortage or abundance, determine the location of hunting bands, it does provide natural boundaries which form convenient borders between each hunting band. The total territory is more than ample for the total population, and the even distribution of game and vegetable foods means that there are no preferential areas that might make for rivalry between one band and the next. There is, in any case, a safety factor in that the bands are arranged side by side, in several vast circles, in the center of each of which the boundaries are so loosely drawn that there is effectively a no-man's-land, in which anyone may hunt and where bands occasionally, though rarely, may come in contact with each other.

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The only territory to be considered, then, is that of the individual hunting band. This is again, in all cases except possibly the area

⁴ The *madé* is a conical pipe, open at both ends, made of two hollowed-out cross-sections cut lengthwise, bound together either by *nkusa* twine or by strips of vine. The pouring of water, which is comparable to the pouring of water through the *molimo* trumpet (see Chapter 14) may have ritual significance, but is explained invariably and unhesitatingly as being necessary simply to get a better sound. It swells the wood and binds the sections closer to each other.

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WAYWARD SERVANTS

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563 ing the Mbuti, are not only trying to subject the Mbuti to the authority of village supernatural sanctions but are also trying to assimilate from the Mbuti some of the spiritual power they believe to reside in the forest.

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648 The ultimate nature of the relationship between the two people cannot be determined until further studies have been made of similar situations from both the Mbuti point of view and, a major need at the moment, from the village point of view. For now, it seems sufficiently clear that the general nature of the relationship is one of opposition, and that Mbuti society, in response to the demands of the situation or by fortuitous chance, meets it with an organization based upon the very antithesis of village organization. Against political centralization it offers complete decentralization and diffusion of authority. Against

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[621] a sedentary, patrilineal, patrilocal village it matches the nomadic, nonlinear, territorial band. The vertical village kinship system is countered by a horizontal age-level system. Village values are directly opposed by forest values. And within itself Mbuti society uses these same principles, in a state of almost perpetual flux, to maintain a cohesion fully as powerful as that found among the villagers. Instead of looking to the more conventional structural principles for the source of unity of Mbuti society, we have had to look rather to values, and it is in terms of values that the over-all society, of Mbuti and villagers, has its ultimate being and significance.

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THE WORLD OF THE FOREST

hunting but also working on plantations, cutting wood and drawing 114
water. None of this was true of the Pygmies that I knew. But I did 177
agree with Schebesta about the *molimo* (a religious festival). Al-
though he had not seen it himself, from what he heard about it and
about similar practices among other groups of Pygmies, he felt sure
that it was essentially different from the practices of neighboring
Negroes, however similar they might appear to be on the surface.
This certainly tallied with my own experience.

The general picture that emerged from his studies was that there 114
were, living in the Ituri Forest, some 35,000 BaMbuti Pygmies, 101
divided into three linguistic groups, speaking dialects of three major 197
Negro languages. The Pygmies seemed to have lost their own lan- [61]
guage, due to the process of acculturation though traces remained, [77]
especially in tonal pattern. Only in the easternmost group did Sche- [84]
besta feel that the language had survived to any recognizable extent.
These were the Efe Pygmies who lived among the BaLese, an eastern
Sudanic tribe with a not very savory reputation for cannibalism,
witchcraft and sorcery.

But in spite of this linguistic difference, and the fact that the Efe 114
also differed in that they did not hunt with nets but with bow and 105
arrow and spear, Schebesta believed that all the BaMbuti were a [184]
single cultural unit. They tended to live in small groups of from three [411]
families upward, moving around the forest from camp to camp,
though always attached to some Negro village with which they
traded meat for plantation products. There was no form of chieftain-
ship, and no mechanism for maintaining law and order, and it was
difficult—from Schebesta's account—to see what prevented these
isolated groups from falling into complete chaos. The most powerful 114
unifying factor, it appeared, was the domination of the Pygmies by 105
the Negroes. Schebesta cited the *nkumbi* initiation as an example of 177
the way Negroes forced the BaMbuti to accept their authority and
that of their tribal lore. Remembering what I had seen, living in an

THE FOREST PEOPLE

114 initiation camp, I could not accept this point of view at all. Yet it
• 105 was one shared by others, some of whom had lived in the area for
177 years.

114 The explanation was simple enough, and it was not that either
177 one of us was right and the other wrong. Whereas Father Schebesta
had always had to work through Negroes, and largely in Negro
villages, I had been fortunate in being able to make direct contact
with the Pygmies, and in fact had spent most of my time with them
away from Negro influence. Other Europeans had also only seen the
Pygmies either in Negro villages or on Negro plantations. But I had
seen enough of them both in the forest and in the village to know
that they were completely different people in the two sets of circum-
stances. All that we knew of them to date had been based on obser-
vations made either in the villages or in the presence of Negroes.

114 Whereas my first visit to the Ituri Forest, in 1951, had been
made mainly out of curiosity, I had seen enough to make me want
to return to this area for more intensive study. An ideal location was
provided by a strange establishment set up on the banks of the Epulu
River back in the nineteen-twenties by an American anthropologist,
Patrick Putnam.* He had gone there to do his field work but had
liked the place and the people so much that he decided to stay. He
built himself a huge mud mansion, and gradually a village grew up
around him and became known as "Camp Putnam." The Pygmies
treated it just as they treated any other Bantu village (the main
Negro tribes nearby were the BaBira and BaNdaka, with a few Mos-
lem BaNgwana), and used to visit it to trade their meat for planta-
tion products. This was where I first met them.

* Patrick Putnam first went to the Belgian Congo in 1927 to do field work for Harvard University. Apart from one or two brief return visits to the United States he remained there until his death at the end of 1953. At Camp Putnam he established a dispensary and a leper colony, turning his home into a guest house to help pay the expenses of his hospital work.

4: Putnam E-5 (no date) 1948 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

- 105 The foregoing selection is largely self-explanatory. The common notion that the pygmy of the forest leads a simple life is true only in a special sense. He has his band, his kinfolk elsewhere, his relationship with his hosts, his membership in an initiation grade. He has separate relationships with the members of his band, his clanmates outside, his hosts, and his classmates in the initiation school. Every pygmy is a specialist—at hunting—and some, the elephant hunters, are super-specialists. The key to all this is *trade* and an ethnic division of labor between pygmies and hosts.

000 One thing that struck me forcibly while I edited this material was the paucity of "religious" phenomena in pygmy culture. If you remember that ritual is al-

[P. 341-C]